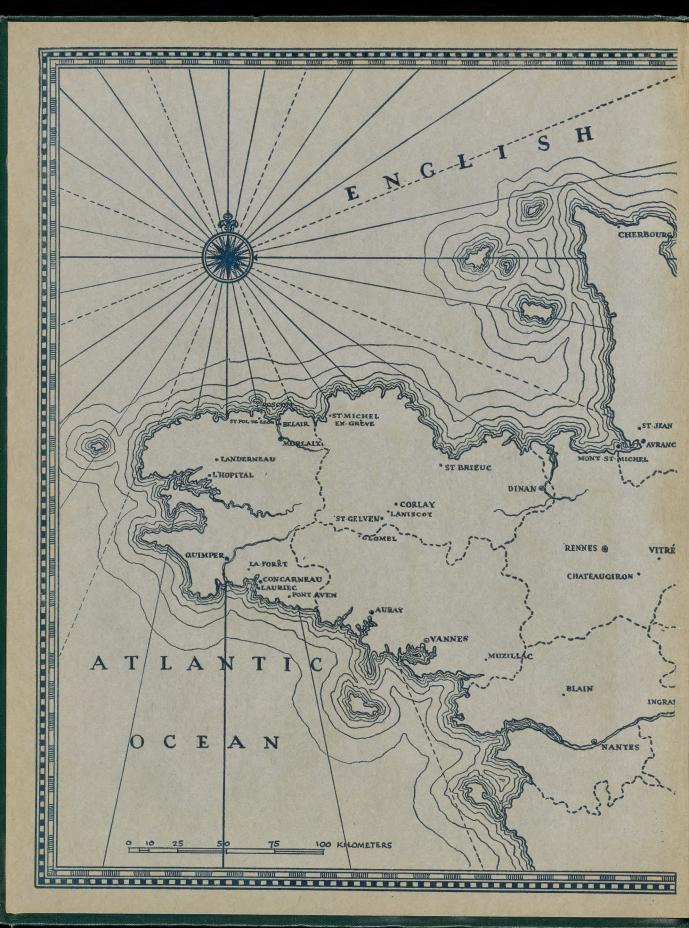
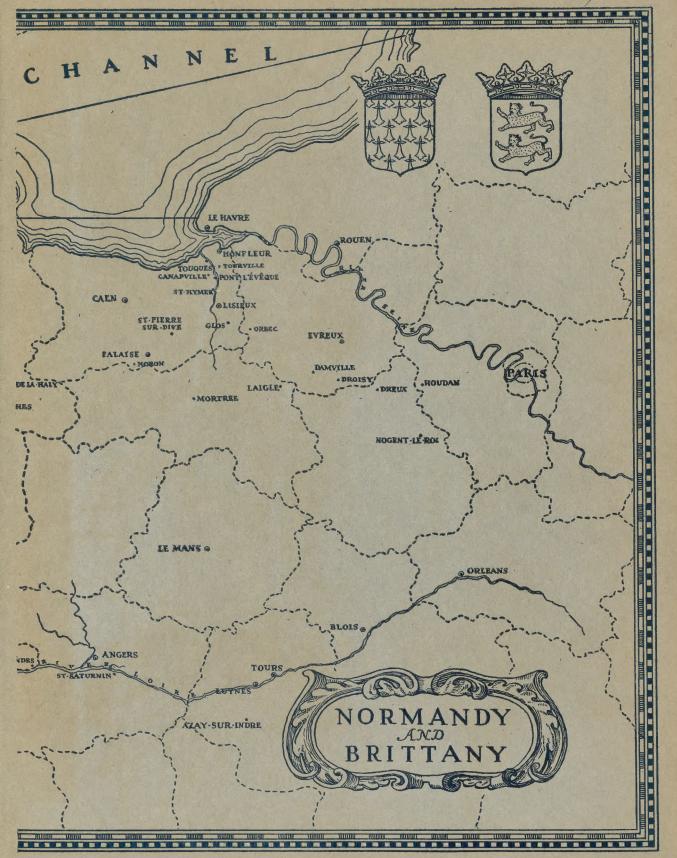
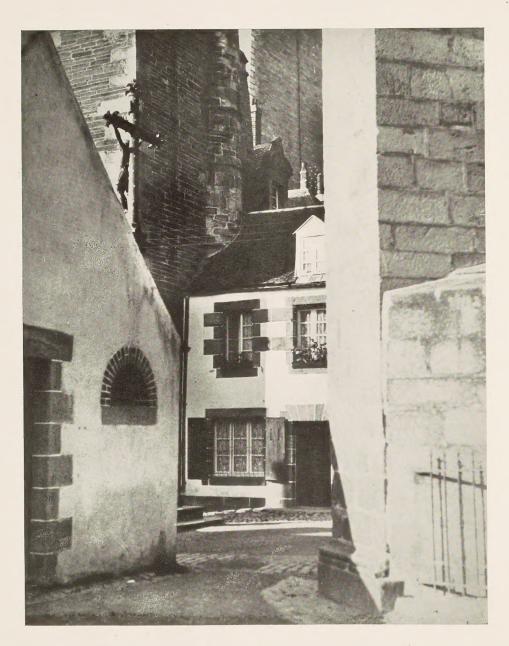
COTTAGES MANOIRS AND OTHER MINOR BUILDINGS OF NORMANDY AND BRITTANY





PROPERATION FRENCH CO.



VENELLE AUX PRÊTRES AT MORLAIX

COTTAGES MANOIRS AND OTHER MINOR BUILDINGS OF NORMANDY AND BRITTANY

BY
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WITH SKETCHES BY LOUIS C ROSENBERG



1926

THE ARCHITECTURAL BOOK PUBLISHING COMPANY PAUL WENZEL & MAURICE KRAKOW 31 EAST 12TH ST NEW YORK CITY

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FOREWORD

THE photographs published herewith were taken principally during a trip through Normandy and Brittany on a motorcycle. At the time the trip was made the purpose was to gather material concerning the minor architecture, particularly small houses, for my personal use in the practice of architecture.

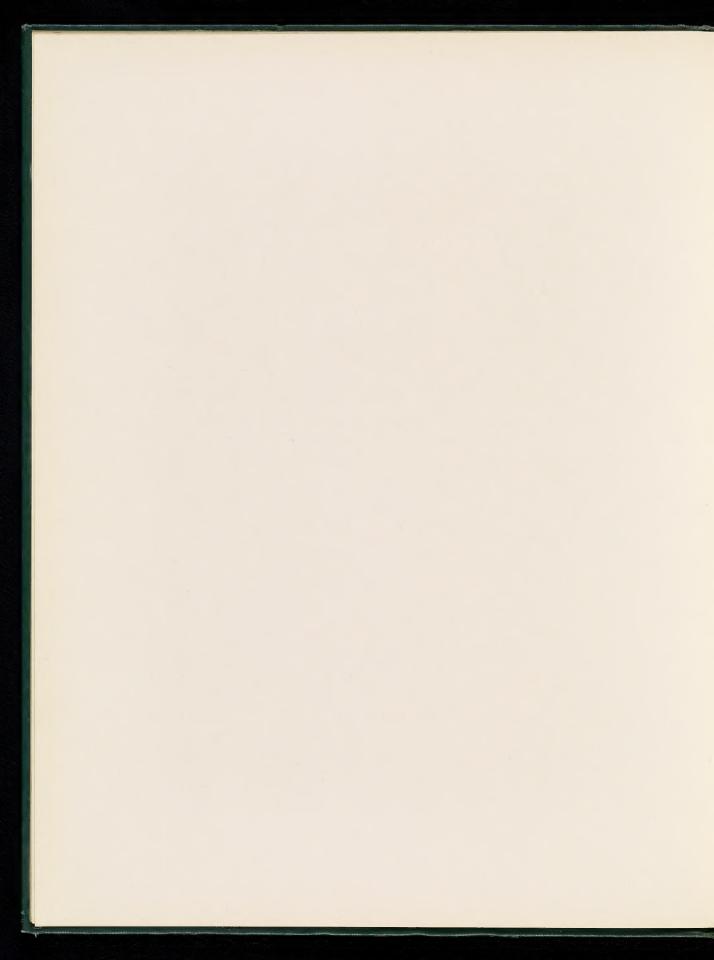
Recently, various architects having evinced an interest in these photographs, it was decided to present them in book form, not in any way as a complete record of the entire district but as typical examples from various points, which it is hoped will be of value to the practising architect.

A few examples of larger work have been included because of the interest of some details found in them. There are also a few examples which properly belong to Touraine and were found toward the end of the trip. These have been included because of their unusual interest and the fact that they are not distinctly different from the Normandy examples.

I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Aymar Embury II and to Mr. LeRoy Barton who have kindly lent me certain photographs from their collections.

WM. D. FOSTER.

NEW YORK CITY, SEPTEMBER, 1926.





INTRODUCTION

THE smaller buildings and particularly the smaller examples of domestic architecture of any district have a fascination due not alone to the fact that they are particular witnesses to the life of the times in which they were built, but even more to the fact that they have an intimate appeal to a great majority of people. The larger and more monumental work will be admired and studied by the architect in a professional manner, frequently to the point of adoration, and also by the layman, most generally from the point of view of history. But when the smaller and more picturesque work is at hand an intimate relation arises immediately, together with a certain desire to possess something similar. There are few persons, regardless of how formal may be their general mode of living, but have a latent desire for at least a period of simple informality, while for the vast majority circumstances of one kind or another have imposed upon them a simplicity of living.

Accordingly, from necessity on the one hand and from desire on the other, the picturesque small house will always be demanded; at times it will be in short proportion to the demand for the more formal house and at other times in great quantity, as a reaction from a prolonged period of too much formality.

A good picturesque design is difficult to achieve because of the very anomaly of the two words. "Picturesque" rather precludes "design." It is more accidental with various parts added by chance and because of definite requirements; it depends for its charm more

on mass and texture and color than on symmetry and detail. To be sure, there is always a certain amount of balance but it is that balance which comes as a natural result of the instinctive desire for order and repose rather than as the result of studied design.

Among the many places in the world which are known as picturesque, Normandy and Brittany are the names which call to mind the most vivid pictures. Easily accessible, these provinces of France have been visited by more travellers and painted by more artists than probably any other.

The landscape of Normandy is notable for the fullness and richness of the vegetation; not only is the soil very fertile but the general dampness of the climate is favorable to such growth. There are hills and verdant valleys, but principally it is a rolling country covered with well cultivated fields and orchards and dotted with cottages and farmhouses. Spring - "Apple Blossom Time" is just about irresistible in Normandy. One can hardly imagine a more perfect setting for domestic architecture than the soft willowy green of young leaves mixed with the great masses of fruit blossoms as one sees them at that time on every side. Almost any cottage or small house becomes picturesque under such conditions.

Brittany, on the other hand, as one gets away from Normandy and really into the peninsula, is picturesque in quite a different sense. The general physical aspect of the countryside is barren. There is rock everywhere and in the central portion there are great stretches of almost nude country where the few trees are stunted and windblown and where a low gorse-like bush is the chief growth. For hours one can drive along a road without seeing any particular cultivation and indeed very few places of habitation. This lack of fertile soil and the extraordinary frequency of mists and rains give Brittany the feeling of bleakness and its picturesqueness, so far as landscape is concerned, is due to this very fact.

The most really picturesque part of Brittany is its coast which is not only very long — north, west and south—but is also extremely irregular. Although always rocky, these indentations of the sea-line afford innumerable little harbors with here and there a row or two of fishermen's houses forming a village.

Fishing, and the canning of the fish, are about the chief occupations of the Breton though in the interior cattle-raising is fairly important. One can readily appreciate the extent of the cattle-raising if he happens to be in a town on the day of a fair or market. The streets are then filled with cattle of every description; they are not only in the marketplace but they literally block the roadways up to the very doorsteps. No matter what means of transportation a tourist may have he will walk through such a scene, prodding as he goes, for the owners of the animals will be too engrossed in conversation to pay much attention to him. Cattle are the chief article of trade at these times rather than the clothing, household wares and trinkets found at the usual village fair. Another interesting variation of custom found in Brittany, which is also due to the lack of fertile soil, is the supplanting of the customary bottle of "vin ordinaire," served with a French table d'hote dinner, by a carafe of cider. Cider, in varying degrees of hardness, is the universal drink for while grapevines do not flourish in Brittany apple trees do.

In neither Normandy or Brittany are there many large cities and with a few exceptions, as Rennes and Rouen, no real industrial centers. There is, of course, certain manufacturing

at particular points, such as the pottery kilns at Quimper, but for the most part the people are engaged in agriculture, cattle-raising or fishing. Accordingly, there are few fine town houses and few real chateaux to engage our attention; it is the cottages and farmhouses along the roadsides, the smaller village houses and an occasional manoir which are the most interesting.

In Normandy the materials which were used most frequently for these buildings was brick and limestone or a combination of the two and, as in all parts of France, a very generous proportion of stucco. There is a great deal of limestone which is easily obtainable, especially near Caen, so that its use is particularly noticeable in that northern district. It is a stone of a warm yellowish tone, or rather it weathers to that tone, so that where it has been used in combination with brick, as on the front of the manoir near Touques (Plate 13), the effect is much more pleasing than the photograph shows as there is not the contrast of color in actuality that appears in the reproduction. In the case of the manoir near Touques the brick is a soft salmon-red which blends beautifully with the stone into one general tone. On buildings where stucco has been used the usual scheme has been to use cut stone at the corners and around all the openings with the rest of the wall spaces built of smaller rough stones, like a cobble-stone wall, and then covered with stucco.

The texture of the stucco is quite even; there seems to have been no attempt to achieve a hand modelled surface such as is found in the southern provinces and in Italy. Here it has been applied as smooth and true as possible but the coarseness of the sand does give a certain roughness of texture. In addition, Age, which has discolored the surfaces and caused bits to chip off here and there exposing the stones underneath, and the patching which has been done from time to time have added interest to the original texture.

Stone shingles rather than slate were generally used for the roofs although around Honfleur the true slate has been used a great deal. In fact, bordering the basin or inner harbor at Honfleur there are rows of four and five story houses where not only the roofs are of slates but the whole facades have been covered with them, giving a bluish-black tone which is woefully drab. There are also a number of thatch roofs still in evidence throughout both Normandy and Brittany though they are gradually disappearing under the law which makes it necessary to replace the thatch with a non-inflammable material in case repairs are to be made to more than a certain proportion of an old roof.



SKETCH SHOWING CHIMNEY DRIPSTONES

An interesting detail is seen on the chimneys of many of the houses. At the base of the chimney, about an inch clear of where it comes through the roof, a drip stone was built in to take the place of the flashing which we use to-day. In most cases this joint was made watertight with cement, the same as it was used at the gable end overhangs and at the ridges.

Half-timber work is found at various places though it seems to have been used chiefly in the towns and for the larger country buildings and even then frequently only for details or a portion of the building in conjunction with masonry work. Lisieux is well known for its many examples of old half-timber houses with their different stories projecting one above the other further and further over the narrow streets, the medieval reverse of our modern zoning requirements.

In Brittany the people and the architecture reflect the country to a remarkable degree. The Breton himself is almost as ungiving as the land; he is suspicious of all outsiders with their different manners and has clung tenaciously to his own customs and traditions as no other Frenchman has. His clothing even on week-days is different from the modern dress while on Sundays and fête days he comes forth in all the splendor that his medieval forebears knew. Vests richly embroidered in many colors, great full dresses with brightly colored jackets, stiffly starched lace head-dresses and broad brimmed hats with ribbons flowing down the back are all worn naturally and not for the entertainment of the tourists as one might suspect. The language also holds to the old traditions and is much more Celtic than French; it is unusual to find a grandmother or grandfather who can speak or read French. All this is largely due to the geography of the land by which the inhabitants have always been more or less protected from invasion. While the Bretons have had their wars, they were usually victorious at least to the extent that they were able to keep out any great influx of foreign tribes and in that way the original pure-blooded Celtic stock had time to take root firmly, stamping a character on these provincials which has set them rather apart from the remainder of the French people.

Breton architecture is also distinctly different from the rest of French architecture. Although the different styles of different periods reached out into this northwestern peninsula and left their marks here as elsewhere it was always with a distinct, though almost indefinable, Breton twist to the detail and especially to the carving, a grotesque twist that is found only in this section. The stone which abounds on all hands, is a very hard, almost granitelike, sandstone and is particularly hard to carve, which accounts for much of the lack of grace in the motifs used. It also accounts for the fact that very little carved detail is used in the minor domestic work and then it is only of a very blocky character such as is shown in the details of doorways (Plates 32 and 33).

The typical Breton cottage is either entirely of this dark stone laid up in rather large pieces and with wide joints of pure white mortar or it has the stones only at the corners and around the openings while the rest of the surfaces are of stucco, also pure white. The whiteness of the stucco and of the mortar joints does tone down but it is considered the proper thing to brighten it up from time to time. It is the sharp contrast of the white cement with the dark stone which gives a certain harshness to the Breton cottages, and at the same time makes them distinct.

The cottage interiors generally have whitewashed plaster walls relieved only by the color of the pots and pans of shiny brass or copper which hang around the fireplace and by the dark brown of the carved furniture. The Breton has lavished his decorative sense in his home on carving the furniture and everywhere there are armoires, beds of both the open and the well-known "lit-clos" type, spoon racks and bread racks, all of them with the spikey low relief ornament which is typical. In some cases as shown in the interior of the

roadside cottage at St. Gelven (Plate 15) the bed and armoire and even the clock were built into the wall, forming a more or less panelled side to the room. The interior of the main room in the manoir near Touques in Normandy (Plate 15) shows the more ambitious treatment of a larger house but even there the walls are simply whitewashed and there is no evidence of any wood panelling or boiserie.

At Morlaix it is interesting to note that all of the sixteenth century houses were built on the same general plan. The scheme was to divide the house into a front and a rear portion with a covered court between the two. In the front part there was usually a shop on the ground floor with its own entrance while the living quarters were above this and throughout the rear part and with a separate entrance for the family. While the court ran through the entire height of the building it was roofed over with the other parts and was glazed so that it was quite light. In one corner of the court was a spiral staircase of wood



16th CENTURY STAIRCASE AT MORLAIX

which was rather generously carved and built around a long continuous newel post; at each floor the stair separated and continued in two directions, one leading to a balcony and the rear rooms and the other to the front. The illustration on this page is of one of these stairs which to-day is still in good condition. The newel is of one piece of wood and runs through three stories with finely carved figures at each story height and another acting as a finial.

The churches are perhaps the most remarkable feature of Brittany. While there are few monumental buildings and few chateaux to show the more sophisticated side of Breton architecture there are churches everywhere. And not only are there many churches but they are all rather richly decorated with carving. Although the Breton did not exert himself much toward ornamenting his dwellings he did not stint when it came to the churches; they are the strongest evidence of the deep religious sentiment that has permeated the Celtic race at all times.

It is in the detail of the churches, the spires and the belfries with their balconies, and in the detail of the carving that one sees the characteristics which mark them as distinctly Breton whether they were designed in Gothic times or during the Renaissance. Another distinctly characteristic Breton touch are the picturesque calvaires which are seen beside almost every church. They are also found scattered throughout the countryside, particularly at road crossings where travellers may stop and pray while to some of the more important

and more elaborate ones annual pilgrimages are still made. A typical three-branched calvaire is shown in connection with the church at Locquénolé (Plate 63).

The churches of Normandy are softer in tone and in detail of carving than those of Brittany and they follow more nearly the styles of those in other parts of France. A typical example of the smaller church is that at Ponts (Plate 26), a mere village at the foot of the plateau occupied by the city of Avranches. The interior has a wooden barrel vault with the simplest type of wooden truss; frequently the bottom members of these trusses were carved at the ends with dragon heads so that the beams seemed to be held by their mouths. This construction of ceiling is found very generally in the towns along the coasts of both Normandy and Brittany and is very similar to the framing of boat bottoms. They serve as reminders that ship-building was near at hand at one time. There are only a few examples of churches shown herein as emphasis has been held to the domestic work.

Little is to be found in the plans of the domestic work which is really adaptable to American ways of living. In the cottages the arrangement of rooms is so simple that they can hardly be called plans; there is no particular scheme of circulation, there are no closets, no bathrooms, no kitchens and no porches. They lack those things which go to make up the problem of our small house plan. Even in the town houses and the still larger manoirs, where there are more of these special conveniences, we do not find much that is adaptable to our purposes. But the exteriors are rich in suggestions for mass, for roof treatments, for textures of walls, for fenestration, and for many details, as dormers, chimneys and doorways. It is with this field of inspiration in mind that the following illustrations of the architecture of Normandy and Brittany are presented.



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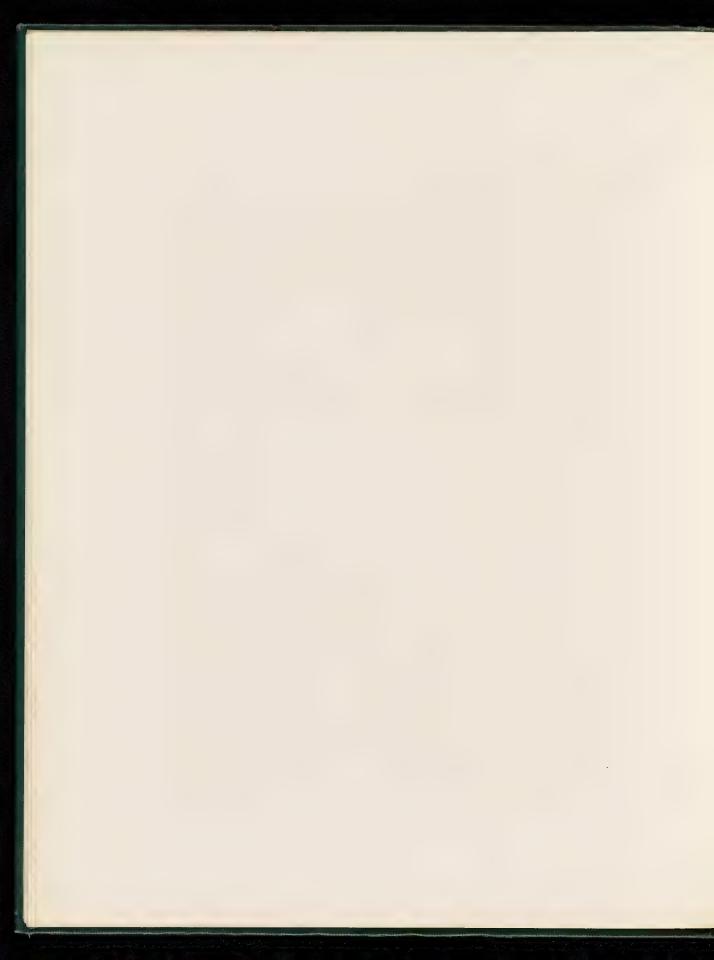
Cottage at Azay-sur-Indre, Two Views.



FARM GROUP NEAR NOGENT-LE-ROI



FARM GROUP NEAR NOGENT-LE-ROI





FARM BUILDING BETWEEN LAIGLE AND GLOS



COTTAGES AT DAMVILLE





HOUSE AT NOGENT-LE-ROI





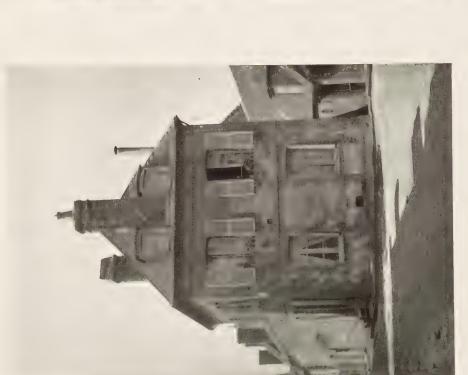


STREET IN LAIGLE



DEPENDENT BUILDING OF CHATEAU AT LAIGLE





PIGEONNIER OF CHATEAU DE BOELE







FARM BUILDING AT DROISY



FARMYARD OF CHATEAU AT ST. PIERRE SUR-DIVE





REAR OF CHATEAU AT ST. PIERRE-SUR-DIVE



CHATEAU DE BOELE NEAR GLOS





OLDER PORTION FROM ACROSS MOAT, CHATEAU RABAIS NEAR LES BOTTEREAUX



LATER PORTION AT ENTRANCE COURT, CHATEAU RABAIS NEAR LES BOTTEREAUX





VILLAGE CHURCH NEAR DREUX



COTTAGE AT ORBEC





COTTAGES ON ROAD TO HONFLEUR





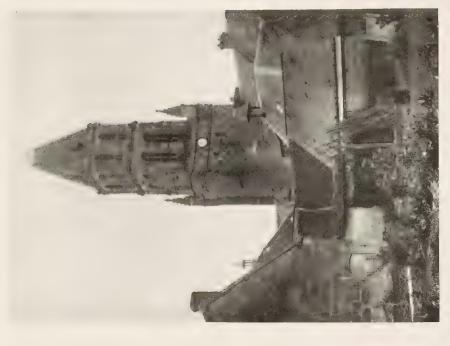
HOUSE NEAR HONFLEUR



REAR OF HOTEL L'EQUERRE AT ORBEC







CHURCH AT ORBEC

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DEPENDENT BUILDING OF MANOIR NEAR TOUQUES



FRONT VIEW OF MANOIR NEAR TOUQUES







END VIEW OF MANOIR NEAR TOUQUES





INTERIOR OF MANOIR NEAR TOUGUES



INTERIOR OF FARMHOUSE AT ST. GELVEN SHOWING BRETON BED AND ARMOIRE





FOURTEENTH CENTURY HOUSE AT LISIEUX





DETAIL OF MANOIR AT CANAPVILLE





COTTAGE OF MANOIR AT CANAPVILLE



MANOIR AT TOURVILLE





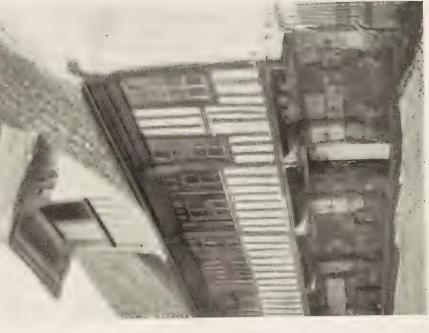
MANOIR DE L'AUMÔNERIE AT ST. HYMER





DETAIL OF MANOIR DE L'AUMÔNERIE AT ST. HYMER







FORMER CONVENT AT PONT L'EVÊQUE





FORMER CONVENT AT PONT L'ÉVÊQUE





FRONT VIEW OF MANOIR BETWEEN FALAISE AND NORON



REAR VIEW OF MANOIR BETWEEN FALAISE AND NORON





END VIEW OF MANOIR BETWEEN FALAISE AND NORON





HOUSE AT LANISCOT



FARMHOUSE NEAR AVRANCHES





CHURCH AT PONTS NEAR AVRANCHES



INTERIOR OF CHURCH AT PONTS







DETAIL CHANCEL END OF CHURCH AT PONTS





THE RAMPARTS AT MONT ST. MICHEL



THE LIEUTENANCY AT HONFLEUR





HOUSE AT VITRE



ENTRANCE TO CHATEAU AT VITRE





HOUSES AT HONFLEUR



HOUSES AT VITRÉ





W

OLD CHURCH (NOW THE MUSEUM) AT HONFLEUR





GATEWAY AT MORLAIX



DOORWAY AT MORLAIX





DETAIL OF POST AND BRACKETS AT MORLAIX



DOORWAY AT MORLAIX





HOUSE OF QUEEN ANNE AT MORLAIX



DETAIL OF HOUSE AT MORLAIX





HOUSES AT DINAN



HOUSES AT MORLAIX





STREET IN DINAN



STREET IN DINAN





GATEWAY IN DINAN



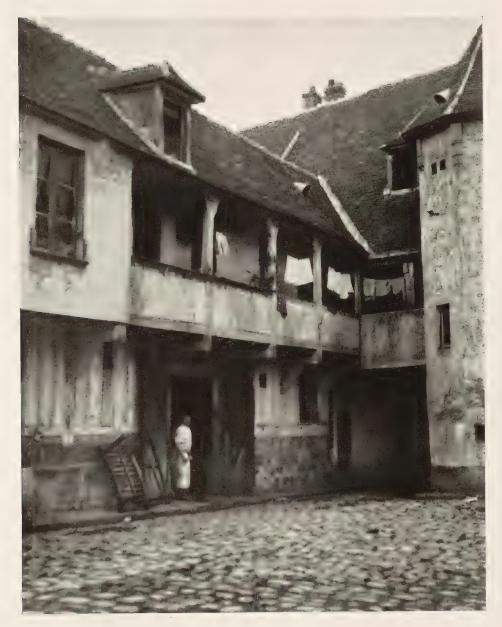


HOUSE AT MORLAIX



STREET ENTRANCE TO COURTYARD AT HOUDAN





COURTYARD AT HOUDAN





COURTYARD AT HOUDAN





HOUSE AT QUIMPER



HOUSE AT MORLAIX





HOUSE AT QUIMPER



HOUSE AT VANNES





FARMHOUSE AT LANISCOT





COTTAGE AT LANISCOT



COTTAGE AT LAURIEC





VIEW OF BELAIR, NEAR MORLAIX



FARMHOUSE BETWEEN MORLAIX AND BELAIR





HOUSES AT BELAIR



HOUSES AT BELAIR





CHURCH AT ST. JEAN-DE-LA-HAIY





CHURCH AT ST. JEAN-DE-LA-HAIY





HOUSES AT CORLAY



"THE SQUARE" AT CORLAY





CHURCH AT CORLAY





HOUSE AT CORLAY



HOUSE AT CORLAY





HOUSES AT MORLAIX



HOUSES AT QUIMPER





STREET IN LAURIEC





HOUSE AT GLOMEL



FARM BUILDING ON ESTATE NEAR GLOMEL



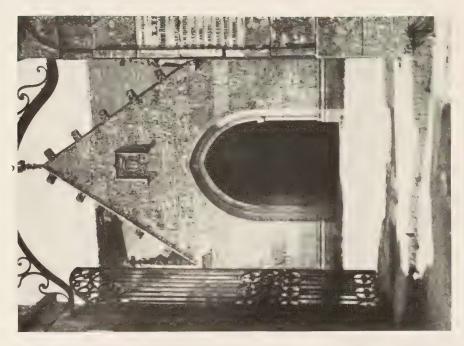


HOUSE AT GLOMEL





DETAIL OF CHURCH OF STE, MELAINE AT MORLAIX

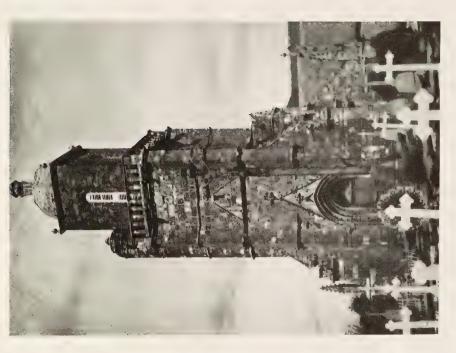


DETAIL OF CHURCH AT GLOMEI.





CHURCH AT PLOUMILLIAU



CHURCH AT GLOMEL





HOUSE AT CONCARNEAU



HOUSE AT FALAISE





ENTRANCE TO "VILLE-CLOSE" AT CONCARNEAU



MANOIR NEAR FALAISE





GROUP OF HOUSES AT CONCARNEAU



HOUSE AT CONCARNEAU





ENTRANCE TO FORECOURT OF MANOIR NEAR LA FORÊT



WALL OF FORECOURT OF MANOIR NEAR LA FORÊT





HOUSE AT MUZILLAC



HOUSE AT PONT AVEN





CEMETERY WALL AT VOUGAY



DETAIL OF CHURCH AT LOCQUENOLE





HOUSE AT ST. POL-DE-LÉON





HOUSE AT ST. POL-DE-LEON



HOUSE AT LANDERNEAU





DETAIL CHATEAU OF LESMAES



HOUSE AT ST. POL-DE-LEON







HOUSE AT ROSCOFF



DETAIL OF CHURCH AT ROSCOFF





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DOORWAY IN STAIR TOWER AT DINAN





HOUSES AT LANDERNEAU



CHATEAU AT MORTREE





DEPENDENT BUILDING OF CHATEAU OF LESMAES



HOUSE AT ST. MICHEL-EN-GRÈVES





MEDIEVAL GATEWAY AT VANNES



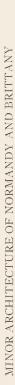


MANOIR AT BLAIN



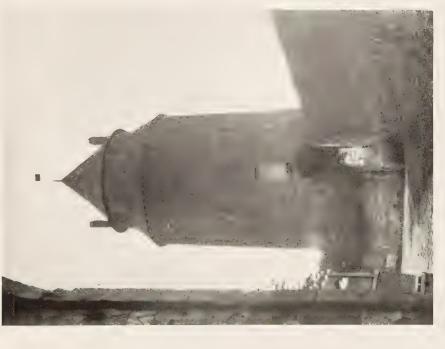
FARMYARD OF CHATEAU NEAR VANNES







ENTRANCE TO CHATEAU AT BLAIN



TOWER FORMERLY PART OF CHATEAU AT CHATEAUGIRON





COURTYARD OF FARMHOUSE NEAR INGRANDES



FARMHOUSE OF CHATEAU AT BLAIN





HOUSE ON ROAD TO LISIEUX





HOUSE AT AURAY



HOUSES AT AURAY





HOUSE AT ANGERS





DOUBLE HOUSE AT ST. SATURNIN



DOUBLE HOUSE AT ST. SATURNIN





FACADE IN COURTYARD OF HOUSE AT ST. SATURNIN





DETAIL OF HOUSE AT ST. SATURNIN



HOUSE AT TOURS



MINOR ARCHITECTURE OF NORMANDY AND BRITTANY



FRONT VIEW OF FARMHOUSE NEAR MONTRÉSOR SHOWING EARLIER PORTION



REAR VIEW OF CARMHOUSE NEAR MONTRÉSOR





FARMHOUSE NEAR PORT DE LUYNES



FARMHOUSE NEAR PORT DE LUYNES



MINOR ARCHITECTURE OF NORMANDY AND BRITTANY



HOUSES AT LUYNES



MINOR ARCHITECTURE OF NORMANDY AND BRITTANY



COTTAGE AT AZAY-SUR-INDRE



COTTAGE AT AZAY-SUR-INDRE



